



# CURRENT

Serving Morton, Grant and Sioux counties

OCTOBER 2020

NEWS

## 'BY THE COMMUNITY, FOR THE COMMUNITY'



PHOTO BY CARMEN DEMNEY

**October is National Co-op Month ... a time when cooperatives celebrate who we are and who we serve — our member-owners. See C4 for a tribute!**

*Journeyman Linemen **Kale Ohlhauser**, foreground, **Cody Graetz**, center, and Lead Man **Jason Jahner** changing a meter and service in the Heil area.*

## What's inside:

- **Annual Meeting recap**
- **Apply for the 2021 Youth Tour**
- **Double R Meats: powering the Carson community and beyond**
- **Meeting minutes and more**



# Mor-Gran-Sou holds historic virtual annual meeting

BY CARMEN DEVNEY



PHOTOS BY DON MASTEL

*BEK TV recorded the annual meeting for members to view. It is posted on Mor-Gran-Sou's website [www.morgransou.com](http://www.morgransou.com). To view, stay on the home page and scroll to the lower right corner; click play.*

**M**or-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative held its 73rd annual meeting — and first virtual annual meeting — on Thursday, Aug. 20. The meeting was stationed in Mandan and broadcast by BEK TV. The theme was, “Lights. Comfort. Connection.”

To watch the meeting, visit [www.morgransou.com](http://www.morgransou.com) and scroll to the lower right corner under “videos.”

Originally scheduled for July 17 at Prairie Knights Pavilion, the annual meeting was delayed and scheduled virtually to keep people safe during the pandemic.

The meeting began at 2 p.m. Mor-Gran-Sou Chief of Staff Jackie Miller welcomed members, and thanked them for voting by mail-in ballot and tuning in online.

Chairman Casey Wells kicked off the business meeting by introducing Father Dennis Schafer, a Flasher native who serves as pastor of St. Lawrence Catholic Church, Flasher; St. Gertrude Catholic Church, Raleigh; and St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Catholic Church, Carson. Father Schafer gave the invocation.

After honoring military members and their families, Chairman Wells addressed the director elections. He welcomed Director Chad Harrison, who introduced the board candidates who were approved by the Nominating Committee.

This year, Mor-Gran-Sou members voted by mail to fill three seats on the board of directors: one for the Grant County position, one for the Mandan-Area position, and one for the Sioux County position. In an uncontested race, Casey Wells from Carson retained the Grant County position. Incumbent Bob J. Leingang from Mandan retained the Mandan area position. New to the board is Rodney Froelich from Selfridge, who was elected to fill the Sioux County seat formerly held by Lance Froelich. Lance chose not to seek re-election.

Mor-Gran-Sou welcomes these members to the board of directors, and thanks Stan Boehm from Mandan and Randal J. White Sr. from Selfridge for campaigning to serve our members. We also thank Lance for his years of service.

Members also voted by mail to approve the 2019 annual meeting minutes.

In other cooperative business, Chairman Wells congratulated the 2019-2020 scholarship winners, who are dependents of Mor-Gran-Sou members. Mor-Gran-Sou awarded one \$500 scholarship to a graduating senior from each of the high schools within its service area. This year’s recipients included Madison Meyer from Elgin-New Leipzig Public School; Steven J. Schmid from Flasher Public School; Mikel Steckler from Glen Ullin Public School; Taizalee Glass from Hebron Public School; Karamea Miller from Mandan Public School; Adam Morman from New Salem-Almont Public School; and Ra’Sheed De’Sean Weasel from Solen Public School. Brenna Olsen also received a scholarship; she attends a school outside the Mor-Gran-Sou service area, and her parents are members. The \$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative/Mor-Gran-Sou scholarship was awarded to Kristin Schaaf from Glen Ullin. Mor-Gran-Sou is proud to play a small role in supporting their educations and careers.

The annual Electric Cooperative Youth Tour was scheduled June 20 to 26. Brynn Gaebe from Century High School won the essay-writing contest and trip to Washington, D.C. Her parents are members Lance and Terry Gaebe. This year’s Youth Tour trip was cancelled due to the pandemic, so Mor-Gran-Sou awarded Brynn a scholarship to further her education.

Chairman Wells introduced Co-General Managers/ Chief Executive Officers Donald Franklund and Travis Kupper, who provided cooperative updates in a coffee-and-conversation format. This year, as your managers guided Mor-Gran-Sou through industry changes, federal regulations, technology and security upgrades and more, Franklund and Kupper were tasked with keeping members



and employees safe.

“The environment we are in this year is far different than what we’ve ever done before,” Franklund said. “The pandemic has definitely been influencing how we are doing things here at Mor-Gran-Sou. It’s changed how we hold the annual meeting; it’s changed how we do our day-to-day operations.”

Kupper noted the service members have been receiving during the pandemic has not changed; only the manner of presentation. Employees are visiting more with members over the phone and through online communications including SmartHub. In addition, members have received cooperative updates through bill stuffers, newsletters, the *North Dakota Living* magazine and on Facebook.

As far as internal operations, employees are utilizing technology to work from various locations, and line crews are working in smaller groups and practicing physical distancing when possible.

Addressing system upgrades, Franklund reflected on when Mor-Gran-Sou entered portions of its transmission system into the Southwest Power Pool (SPP). Mor-Gran-Sou maintains the shared lines and receives a recovery cost through SPP, which benefits the cooperative. System maintenance includes tightening the hardware, making sure the conductor is in good shape, and trimming trees that become obstacles in the power lines. Mor-Gran-Sou continues its pole-testing program on transmission and distribution poles. By staying on top of scheduled maintenance, Mor-Gran-Sou has strengthened the system and reduced the number of unplanned power outages.

Kupper noted more automated calls are going out to members, letting them know about planned outages in their area due to system maintenance that needs to be performed. He encouraged members to sign up for SmartHub, if they have not done so already. This mobile app for smart phones and tablets allows members to ask Mor-Gran-Sou questions, update contact information, pay their utility bill, compare electrical usage from month to month, and learn important updates like when a power outage may be scheduled.

Safety continues to be the culture of Mor-Gran-Sou. Franklund reported the co-op received a 10-year safety award at the Apprenticeship Training and Safety conference in January. Never before conferred in the history of the AT&S program, the award signifies safety excellence; in particular because the co-op persevered through two major snow and ice storms in 2010, with assistance from hundreds of employees and contractors working together to fix the system.

“This is a tremendous award for Mor-Gran-Sou; something the employees should be proud of, and something you, the members, should be proud of,” he said.

Concern for safety extends to the members, who are our eyes in the sky from their corner of our service area.

“We are always looking for problems on the system. If you see something that you just don’t feel is quite right, either a low power line or a power line that is on the ground, please call our office. We will send someone out to take a look at it. It’s all of our jobs to keep each other safe.”

Kupper reported on the financial status of the cooperative. While the economy plays a role in the financial health of the cooperative, Kupper noted the co-op is not directly impacted by the oil industry, although it serves members who are. The agriculture industry has a larger impact on our membership, and we continue to monitor it closely as we provide safe and reliable power to our members. Looking to the future, Mor-Gran-Sou remains stable. “We still need to operate in a prudent and sound manner, in the best interests of all of our members,” Kupper said.

He also reflected on the 2010 storms and subsequent damage that appeared later, and how the cooperative implemented cost savings to work through system repairs. Mor-Gran-Sou members also made a large commitment to the cooperative, in the form of the storm adder.

“Thankfully we were able to remove that storm adder a whole year earlier than planned, to the benefit of our membership,” he said.

When the financial health of the cooperative permits, the Mor-Gran-Sou board of directors makes a decision annually to retire capital credits. As we look at this year’s



Mor-Gran-Sou Board Chair **Casey Wells**, at podium, prepares to welcome Vice Chair **Chad Harrison** to introduce this year’s board candidates.



financial position, and while it is still too early to confirm, it does appear that the board may retire capital credits at the end of this year. When a retirement occurs, checks are typically mailed to members in November prior to the Thanksgiving holiday.

Mor-Gran-Sou is also closely watching the development of renewable energy in its service area. Larger-scale wind farms have been around for a while. Now, the cooperative is seeing interest in smaller-scale operations, such as members adding solar panels to their home, or farm or ranch.

“We are expecting that to be a trend that will continue well into the future, as the small-generation facility costs continue to come down,” Franklund said. “As that development takes place, Mor-Gran-Sou will be there to work with the member on how to bring that electricity from your home into the market, if you wish to do that.”

Supporting our members has been the foundation of the cooperative since its inception. Kupper noted Mor-Gran-Sou still offers its scholarship program, Youth Tour sponsorship, grants and donations to improve the quality of life in our area communities. Operation Round Up is part of that support. This program allows Mor-Gran-Sou members to voluntarily round up their monthly utility bills to the next dollar and donate their change. The foundation board members, who are also Mor-Gran-Sou members, meet and disburse funds in the form of grants to non-profit corporations, organizations or agencies in the Mor-Gran-Sou service area for charitable causes and critical needs. Members were encouraged to contact the cooperative for an application and opt into the program.

While COVID-19 has changed the way the cooperative operates, Franklund noted it has not changed its commitment in serving the members. He closed the managers’ review by saying the co-op and membership would work through challenges together. He thanked them for their support.

Alex Craigmile, chief financial officer, then presented the financial report. He reported Brady, Martz & Associates, P.C. audited the 2019 financial statements of Mor-Gran-Sou, and presented their report to the board of directors with an “unmodified opinion,” the highest opinion they can give.

Before the meeting closed, the Operation Round Up Charitable Foundation offered members who signed up for the program at the 2019 annual meeting to be eligible to win one of two \$50 bill credits at the 2020 annual meeting. Nineteen members registered in 2019. Out of those names, Steve and Francie Koppy, Mandan, and Mary Kalvoda, Mandan, will receive a \$50 bill credit.

All members who cast a mail-in ballot for this year’s board election received a \$10 bill credit. It was applied to the bill members received in September.

A reorganizational board meeting was held in August. Casey Wells remains the chair, Chad Harrison remains the vice chair, and Pam Geiger was elected to serve as secretary/treasurer.

The board of directors and staff of Mor-Gran-Sou wish to thank our members for participating in the 73rd annual meeting of the membership virtually, and look forward to meeting their electrical needs in the future. ■



## #PowerOn with National Cooperative Month!

September marked the 25th anniversary of the seven Cooperative Principles being adopted as part of the Statement on the Cooperative Identity. This statement reads: “A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.” It also includes our values, as show in these icons. Members, this is YOUR cooperative, and we are here because of you ... and for you!

This month, we celebrate October is National Cooperative Month ... a time when cooperatives across the state and nation celebrate who we are and who we serve — our member-owners. This year’s theme is, “Power On.”

We are proud to power your tools and toys, work and volunteer in our local communities, and give back through scholarships, grants and more.

Together with our members, we are making a difference! ■



**JUNE 21 TO 26, 2021**

## AN ALL-EXPENSE-PAID TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

- To enter the essay-writing contest, you must be a sophomore or junior in high school.
- You and your parents or guardian must be served by Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative.
- If you have any questions, please contact Julie Armijo at Mor-Gran-Sou at 701-597-3301, 701-663-0297 or 800-750-8212 during regular business hours.
- The deadline is Jan. 13, 2021. You can email entries to Julie Armijo at [jarmijo@morgransou.com](mailto:jarmijo@morgransou.com) or mail a hard copy to: Youth Tour Essay Contest, Mor-Gran Sou Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 297, Flasher, ND 58535-0297.

## ESSAY QUESTION:

*The Electric Cooperative Youth Tour includes the opportunity to tour many historic sites, monuments and museums of great significance to our country's government, rich history and culture. Name two of these within the Washington, D.C., area you would most like to see. Describe why these are important to you and why they should be important to others.*

## TOP 3 REASONS TO ENTER THE ESSAY-WRITING CONTEST

1. All-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., compliments of Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative
2. A whole week to visit unforgettable historic monuments, museums and the U.S. Capitol
3. A learning experience you'll never forget



CHECK OUT THE ESSAY CONTEST GUIDELINES AT  
[www.ndyouthtour.com](http://www.ndyouthtour.com)



*Double R Meats has six full-time employees, plus owners Rod and Nyra Ruscheinsky, and Rod's dad, Ralph, who works part-time and likes to visit. Nyra is in charge of the retail department, and Rod is in charge of the custom department. Nyra says they have a great group of workers who get along really well. In this line of work, having a sense of humor is a must, and among the staff they have a lot of laughs. There are also the occasional mistakes, like when someone forgets to add the right seasoning to the sausage. Is it possible to mess up those incredibly good jerky sticks? You probably won't find those mistakes in the trash.*

## **'Just like grandma and grandpa's sausage'** **Double R Meats in Carson thrives, helps keep small-town community alive**

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CARMEN DEVNEY

**A**s she slices and packages cheese to fill a customer's order, Nyra Ruscheinsky is asked about the Band-Aid protecting her finger. She laughs about the temporary discomfort and says, "Once a year, I nick a finger with the slicer. It's a standard procedure."

The cut is a blessing, in some ways.

It is a reminder that business is good. Customers are loyal. Their business often brings additional business to Carson, and their small town lives on.

Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative members from



*Mor-Gran-Sou members **Rod and Nyra Ruscheinsky**, owners of Double R Meats in Carson, have five children and one dog, and recently became first-time grandparents. One son is still in high school, and the other four live within an easy drive from Carson. "Our kids are all pretty close, and we get to see them often," Nyra says. Looking to the future, Grandpa Rod is looking forward to teaching the next generation to hunt, and Nyra will stay home and take care of the babies.*



north of Carson, Nyra and her husband Rodney have owned and operated Double R Meats on Main Street for 28 years. They work six days a week, putting in long hours and physical labor.

Double R Meats is a common name across the state and beyond. Well-known for its custom seasonings and smoked products, Rod and Nyra and their seven employees are busy.

Last year, they processed 475 to 500 head of beef, 100 to 120 pigs, about 20 sheep, and made about 54,822 pounds of sausage.

Over the course of 28 years, Rod thinks he's processed around 13,300 beef.

"We are already booking up to 2022, as far as custom processing. The rest of the year and all of next year is booked with regular clients," Nyra says. "We can't fit more people in."

They say their success has nothing to do with the pandemic and price of meat. It has everything to do with area ranchers raising good-quality beef, and wanting to get it processed locally.

"We have been overly blessed. I really don't have complaints. We have an excellent customer base with good, honest, friendly customers. They come in and you can visit with them," Nyra says.

"They support us, and we are here for them. God is good."

## Driving all the way to 'little Carson' for meat

Nyra Timboe grew up on a dairy farm north of Carson, and Rod grew up in town. The two met in high school. Rod says he always wanted to stay close to his parents after he graduated, and help them. Nyra says she never saw herself going far from home, either.

Rod started working for Double R Meats in his late teens, and Nyra took a job teaching at Carson Public School. The couple married in 1991. Rod was in his early '20s and had six years of experience, when they bought the business from Tim Hillius in May 1992. From butchering animals and trimming cuts of meat, to fixing the smokehouse and managing payroll and employees, Rod learned everything on the job.

For more than 10 years, a handful of people worked at the business including Rod, his dad Ralph, and Danny Hartman. During hunting season, additional employees were hired to process deer and wild game.

In 2005, Rod and Nyra built an addition and expanded the business. Nyra quit teaching after 14 years to work full-time at the shop.

"It got busier and busier, and now we are up to seven people," she shares. Word of mouth, good products and

good customers are the key ingredients to their success.

Their best-selling products include country-style sausage and summer sausage, Slim Jims and jerky. They also sell summer sausage and Slim Jims with cheese and jalapeño chili peppers. The "older" crowd also buys a lot of liver sausage and head cheese.

Customers drive from as far north as Wilton to as far south as Mobridge and McIntosh, South Dakota, to stock meat and cheese into coolers to take home. "We have a wide range of people who drive all the way to little Carson, North Dakota, for their meat," Nyra says.

While there are plenty of butcher shops in larger nearby cities, Nyra believes Double R Meats keeps a strong customer base because of its old smoker.

*story continued on page C8*

**Sorry, folks! Double R Meats is BUSY and no longer offers wild game processing.**



*Rod Ruscheinsky typically butchers 10 beef per week so there is always a rotation ready to be processed in the cooler. It can take up to three employees to lift one slab of meat off the hook and onto the saw. Any custom meat that comes through the door has to go back to the customer who owns it and brought it in. Double R Meats can sell meat products that have been state or federally inspected. Only inspected meat can be purchased from Double R Meats and then resold elsewhere. Any inspected meat that has been altered through seasoning, curing, smoking, etc., cannot be purchased for resale.*

# MOR-GRAN-SOU ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

## board meeting highlights



### Meeting date: Aug. 26, 2020

- Held Reorganization, elected Board officers
- Approved the July 17, 2020, Regular Board meeting minutes
- Approved a special equipment capitalization
- Approved a work order inventory
- Approved capital credit refund application to estates, and those age 80 and over
- Reviewed the monthly director's financial report
- Approved amended General Employment Board Governance policy
- Approved Resolution to authorize signatures for associated documents for sale of substation assets and amended Interconnection Agreement
- Approved proposed Board meeting dates for 2021
- Approved annual reaffirmation of Cindy Ternes as Board Acting Secretary
- Approved attendance at upcoming virtual meetings, tentative training classes, and other meetings
- Assigned voting delegates and alternates for upcoming meetings
- Reviewed tentative dates for the 2021 Mor-Gran-Sou Annual Meeting
- Confirmed Board review of the financial report for July
- Reviewed delinquent summary report
- Reviewed senior staff department reports
- Heard legal counsel report
- Heard Co-General Managers/CEOs update, and reports on meetings
- Heard update on Southwest Power Pool
- Heard update on Cooperative's ongoing response to the coronavirus pandemic
- Reviewed Safety Matters newsletter
- Set September Board meeting as a conference call due to COVID pandemic
- Reviewed candidate letters for National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation Board election
- Held Executive Session

### Upcoming regular board meeting date:

Sept. 23; location to be determined

Members may be welcome to attend board meetings. Due to COVID-19, plans can change quickly. Please call the office at 1-800-750-8212 or 597-3301 to confirm the meeting status you wish to attend.

To place an item on the agenda, please contact Board Chair Casey Wells or Co-General Manager/Chief Executive Officer Donald Franklund at 701-597-3301 at least one week in advance.

Members may obtain a copy of approved board minutes by completing and returning the "Request for Information or Data" form. You can find this form at [www.morgransou.com](http://www.morgransou.com), or contact the Flasher office to request a copy.

story continued from page C7



"Most of our products are old-school. A lot of people say our sausages taste just like grandma and grandpa's did," she says.

"Another key thing is there is a lot of modern equipment out there, like a smokehouse that will wash your product for you. We've been told our sausages taste different. I think it's because we still use the old-fashioned smokehouse. It's the same one that came with the meat shop when we bought it from Tim!" Nyra says. "Most of the equipment in here is from 28 years ago, except one of the stuffers.

We are stingy that way. We won't buy new

until we've tried to fix the old, and so far we've been able to get parts."

One added bonus of doing steady business is that other businesses in Carson benefit from the traffic. When people travel to purchase meat, they stop and fill gas, or grab snacks at the grocery store. A worker at the grocery store told Nyra one time, "I love it when you're busy because sometimes we get your customers." What's good for one business is good for the rest.

Nyra's Band-Aid speaks of wear-and-tear on the body; the long hours that turn into long days. She and Rod plan to continue operating until the lifting gets to be too much. Their one day of rest is not enough. They are blessed with one grandchild who needs more time with grandpa to hunt and fish.

When the time comes, they hope to find someone qualified and willing to take it all on ... and see the business carry on, and see the small town of Carson carry on.

For now, they focus on what the Band-Aid represents: many blessings.

"We are a local shop that is part of a bigger community," Nyra concludes. "We're tired at the end of the day, but we are content and comfortable. I can't say enough that life is good!" ■



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#### OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Chair..... Casey Wells  
Vice Chair..... Chad Harrison  
Secretary-Treasurer..... Pam Geiger  
Directors ..... Mark Doll, Vernard Frederick,  
Rodney Froelich, Jay Larson,  
Bob J. Leingang, Kathy Tokach

#### MANAGEMENT

Co-GM/CEO..... Donald A. Franklund  
Co-GM/CEO..... Travis Kupper

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